

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
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R 081621Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 449
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USUN NEW YORK 3028
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDEV, NI, RH
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN PRESS REACTION TO SMITH-NKOMO MEETING

1. TWO LEADING NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS HAVE CARRIER COMMENT CRITICAL OF THE AUGUST MEETING BETWEEN IAN SMITH AND JOSHUA NKOMO. THE FMG-OWNED DAILY TIMES, IN A LENGTHY OPINION ON SEPTEMBER 8, LABELED THE MEETING AN ATTEMPT BY SMITH TO SPLIT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT, THE RESULT OF WHICH WOULD BE THE "SUREST GUARANTEE OF CIVIL WAR" FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE. THE EDITORIAL CONTINUED THAT WHILE THERE IS NO OBJECTION TO TALKS BETWEEN SMITH AND BOTH PF CO-LEADERS, NKOMO'S MEETING ALONE WITH SMITH WAS A MISTAKE. THE ARTICLE SPECIFICALLY CRITICIZED THE NIGERIAN AND ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENTS,
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STATING THAT "THERE IS NO REASON WHY ANY AFRICAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD EITHER ENCOURAGE OR ABET HIM (SMITH) IN HIS SINISTER CALCULATIONS." IT CONCLUDED THAT SMITH IS NOT TO BE TRUSTED, FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH HIM ARE USELESS, AND "IT WOULD BE MUCH MORE SENSIBLE AND PRACTICAL TO GET ON WITH THE GUERRILLA WAR."

2. IN A TAMER EDITORIAL THE SAME DAY, IBADAN'S DAILY SKETCH LAMENTED THAT THE MEETING HAD CAUSED A RIFT BETWEEN NKOMO AND NYERERE WHICH COULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE JOINT AFRICAN LIBERATION EFFORT. THE SKETCH COMMENTED THAT SMITH WAS EITHER DESPERATE OR WISHED TO SPLIT THE PF. IT CONCLUDED THAT WHILE IT WAS NOT OPPOSED TO MEETINGS BETWEEN SMITH AND THE PF, ROBERT MUGABE MUST NOT BE LEFT OUT.

3. COMMENT: IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE NIGERIAN PRESS, AND IN PARTICULAR THE DAILY TIMES, SHOULD CHOOSE TO CRITICIZE A MEETING IN WHICH THE FMG PLAYED SO PROMINENT A ROLE. THIS UNDERLINES ONCE AGAIN THE NIGERIANS' NEED TO MAINTAIN CERTAIN PUBLIC POSTURES FOR THE BENEFIT OF DOMESTIC OPINION, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE AT THE SAME TIME ABLE PRIVATELY TO PURSUE MORE PRAGMATIC INTERNATIONAL POLICIES.
LEWIS

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